



FLOAT NOTES

KIDS DON'T FLOAT Semi-Annual Newsletter

February 2001

Kids Don't Float - Who are we?

Kids Don't Float (KDF) was originally designed in 1996 by folks in Homer to respond to the high rate of drowning deaths. Since then this program has been adapted and spread statewide. The program is currently sponsored by a coalition of agencies: 17th Coast Guard District, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Safe Kids, State Office of Boating Safety.

What Do We Do to Support KDF?

Seventeenth Coast Guard District, primarily through Sue Hargis, promotes safe boating 110% of the time. The Coast Guard prints and distributes the loaner board signs, and purchases PFDs for sites when funds are available. Sue can be reached at (907) 463-2297 or by email shargis@cgalaska.uscg.mil

State Office of Boating Safety, Division of Park and Outdoor Recreation, through Jeff Johnson, is busy working to implement the provisions of the Boating Safety Act, effective July 1, 2000. Alaskans pay a federal tax on marine fuel that supports boating safety in the states. Portions of these funds are purchasing PFDs for KDF sites. Visit the website for the Office of Boating Safety: www.alaskaboatingsafety.org

Alaska SAFE KIDS Coalitions actively promotes and maintains KDF sites in communities around Alaska. KDF has its origins with Homer Safe Kids. For more information about Alaska SAFE KIDS, contact Gordon Glaser at 907-269-3433 or Peggy Hayashi at (907) 261-3194.

Community Health and EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, primarily through Maria Bailey, David Thomson, and Martha Moore, is providing administrative support to KDF. We are compiling a master list of KDF sites, trying to increase communication between sites using this newsletter format, and purchasing PFDs for sites when funds are available.

Get Your KDF Board Ready for the 2001 Boating Season

The Kids Don't Float program is a grass-roots effort to reduce drowning among children and youth. The KDF program is ideal for the spontaneous boater who forgot their child's jacket at home or has an additional child along for the trip. The KDF program is not designed to take away the responsibility of every boater, adult or child, from supplying and wearing their own life jacket.

The greatest challenge facing every KDF site sponsor is keeping an adequate supply of life jackets for their board(s). Each site sponsor must seek community donations and support, as the main program sponsors cannot supply new jackets for every board every year.

Program sponsors, primarily the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Office of Boating Safety, plan to purchase a limited number of life jackets for active Kids Don't Float loaner boards for the upcoming boating season. An estimated 40 sites will be outfitted with jackets.

Jackets for the 2001 Season: Request Process

- 1) Send a letter or email to CHEMS in Juneau by **February 26, 2001**, requesting assistance with life jacket purchases. Identify the number of sets you are requesting and the site locations they will be placed. A set consists of 12 type III lifejackets.
- 2) Priority consideration for jackets will be made to those sites that have not received jackets from either the Office of Boating Safety, the Coast Guard, or CHEMS in the past two years.
- 3) CHEMS will compile a master request list and will work with the Office of Boating Safety to place an order. The target date for delivery of jackets is late April 2001.

How to Contact CHEMS

P.O. Box 110616 Juneau, AK 99811-0616

Phone (907) 465-4170, Fax (907) 465-4101

Email: KDF@health.state.ak.us



Hope Floats Thanks to You! Their Stories

Kids don't Float - Give them something that will! By Tom Fazzini, Kotzebue, Alaska

The Maniilaq Health Center's Office of Injury Prevention participated in the Kids Don't Float program in the summer of 1998. After Alfred Gregg completed the construction of the display boards, the program kicked off June 13 in Kotzebue, Alaska. Because of the heavy boat traffic in the two areas, the display boards were placed in front of Swan Lake and Hansons Eagle Quality Center. There were hot dogs, soda, and candy compliments of Maniilaq Health Association and Hansons Eagle Quality Center. Games and raffles were also conducted. One of the games was a relay race where participants had to properly don a vest, run a short distance, remove the vest and hand it off to a teammate who did the same. The event was a huge success. Throughout the day many residents commented on what a "great idea" the program is.

And a great idea at that! On June 22, around 8:00 PM, 10 year old Radar Lambert and a few friends were enjoying a sunny day by swimming at second creek. Fortunately, the day before, Chris Kittrel buzzed by Hansons Eagle Hardware and grabbed a few PFDs from the Kids Don't Float display, and stashed them under a boat so kids could use them while swimming out there. Chris said, "the current is fast out there. We need the vests so we can swim there."

While playing around on the beach, Radar heard Robin Mitchell yelling. Looking into the direction of the voice he saw his friend, 12-year-old Pamela Smith, going under the water and being taken out by the current. Radar, who is a non-swimmer, grabbed a Kids Don't Float PFD, quickly put it on and doggie paddled about 35 yards. He grabbed his friend, who by this time had gone under for the second

time, and started back to shore. They struggled to fight the current. "I used every muscle in my body to get to shore." Radar reported later. Once on shore a boater was flagged down and Pamela was rushed to the Maniilaq Health Center where she was treated and released.

More Float Stories...

Klawock's Little Heroes

☺ In 1998 four elementary school children received "Little Hero" awards from the superintendent of the school for saving the life of a friend. Several children were playing near the dock area in Klawock, when one fell into the water. Esther Bezemer, Ryan Armour, Robert McNeill and Jessica Watson acted quickly to toss the child a Kids Don't Float PFD and run for help.

Kenai River Drowning

☺ In May of 1999, the Anchorage Daily News reported the drowning of a man in the Kenai River. He was in a 15 foot canoe with one other adult and two children. The canoe had filled with water. The men were sitting on their life jackets, the children were wearing PFDs borrowed from the loaner board.

FYI

The Alaska SAFE KIDS Coalition is part of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.

The **National SAFE KIDS** Campaign is the first and only national organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury — the number one killer of children ages 14 and under.

For more information about SAFE KIDS, visit their website at www.safekids.org

UPDATE ON SITES

At the end of 2000 we have counted 61 active KDF communities all over Alaska.

- ❖ There are 195 loaner boards placed near Alaska's bodies of water.
- ❖ 2 educational programs where volunteers go out to communities and teach water safety.
- ❖ And we are still growing... in the summer of 2001 we anticipate 38 new sites.

Keep us Informed!

Contact CHEMS with updates.

How To Sponsor a Kids Don't Float Program!

Sponsoring a KDF program in your area is easy!

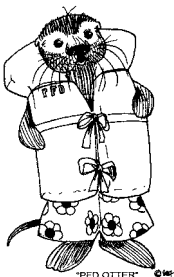
1. Organize/identify a coalition of folks who are interested in setting up a KDF program.
2. Identify potential water site(s) in your area where children access water, to boat or swim.
3. Get permission to install a loaner board at the site.
4. Contact the KDF program at (907) 465-4170.



ATTENTION:

We are looking for new Kids Don't Float site sponsors!

The KDF program is looking for new site sponsors in communities where the program has already been initially established. These communities include **Juneau, Ketchikan, Akutan, and Togiak**. Please contact the KDF program if you are interested in sponsoring site(s) in these locations! Most of the work has already been done, but we need fresh energy to keep the program going (just checking lifejackets, etc).



Kids Don't Float Order Menu:

- ❖ Instructions for making a KDF loaner board
- ❖ KDF Peer Education Program manuals
- ❖ Twenty-six page color booklets with water safety and PFD information
- ❖ PFD Start-up set (2 adults, 4 youths, 4 children, 2 infants)
- ❖ Individual orders available in sizes:

Adult	Youth	Child	Infant
>90lbs	50-90lbs	30-50lbs	<50lbs
30-53"chest	25-29"	20-25"	

Contact the KDF program at (907) 465-4170

Additional Water Safety materials can be obtained from:
Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA)

(907) 747-3287

Cold Water Kids

Water Wise

Outdoor Adventures

U.S. Coast Guard 17th District (907) 463-2297

Video, pamphlets, posters



Chris Husberg of Eagle River (Boy Scout Troop 3) built this Kids Don't Float Board for Cheney Lake in Anchorage. It was part of an Eagle Scout Project.

The Kids Don't Float Peer Educator Program

The KDF Peer Education program was designed to involve high school age students in learning key boating safety concepts and teaching these concepts to elementary students.

It is unique in a few important ways. First, the program directly engages high school students and challenges them to take a leadership role in safety. In order to be successful in conveying the importance of wearing lifejackets, these youth must internalize the safety message.

Second, the program is a major "instructor multiplier" to pass on the safety message. The initial peer educator training time is an investment of approximately 3-4 hours. Five groups of high school students, each with four to five students per group, teach thirty-minute sessions to at least three elementary classes. So from the initial four-hour investment the program reaches up to 400 students with the vital safety message to wear lifejackets.

Third, the program develops youth as leaders. High school peer educator participants make all arrangements for elementary classes, including contact of teachers, class scheduling, obtaining rides, equipment, and class evaluators who observe the class.

And last, but not least, elementary students look up to the students and are naturally attentive. Both elementary school students and high school students are uncharacteristically

enthusiastic about the program, as it allows them to experience a unique learning/teaching situation.

A program packet has been developed for ease of implementation. This packet includes step-by-step instructions, lesson plans, schedule, training activities, program structure guidelines and forms, and lifejacket background information. This enables virtually anyone to immediately implement the program in their region.

Contact Sue Hargis at the Coast Guard (800) 478-6381 or (907)463-2297 if you are interested in implementing this exciting program in your area!!!



Sue Hargis and Martha Moore share a laugh with the Governor as he checks the size on a PFD.

Now is the time to plan Publicity for the 2001 Boating Season

Now is the time to make plans to publicize Kids Don't Float in your community for the upcoming boating season. Write an article with pictures for a local newspaper or newsletter; distribute flyers in schools, preschools and head start; partner or work with local fisherman and boating groups to extend the message. Make sure your community knows the purpose of the loaner board and impress upon them the need to respect the board and the jackets. Vandalism is very demoralizing to a program like KDF. Please share your ideas on marketing and publicity with other site sponsors by sending a copy of your article to CHEMS at KDF@health.state.ak.us